

LGBTQIA+ Glossary of Terms for Teaching in Health Care

The following Glossary of terms was largely extracted from an open-source glossary made available by the National LGBTQIA+ Health Education Center (National Center) of the Fenway Institute with support from the Health Resources Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The National Center was assisted by various experts in LGBTQIA+ Health in compiling the Glossary, and also adapted terms from glossaries published by the Safe Zone Project and the University of California, Los Angeles LGBT Resource Center.

The National Center's Glossary was initially devised to assist health care providers in using acceptable terminology when interacting with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, a-sexual, allies+ (LGBTQIA+) patients. The Curriculum Working Group of the Yale School of Medicine's Dean's Advisory Council for LGBTQI+ Affairs (DAC) finds that the Glossary is also a useful tool for teaching health professional trainees in LGBTQIA+ health-related care and treatment. The Working Group has *largely* adopted the terminology and definitions from the National Center's Glossary, however, we have made minor adaptations and additions of terms that also should be useful for teachers, and have also created hyperlinks between related terms throughout the document. As such, DAC and the Curriculum Working Group take responsibility for the contents of the below version of the Glossary; adaptations do not necessarily represent the views of the National LGBTQIA+ Health Education Center nor the endorsement by the funders and co-developers of the National Center's Glossary. For this latter content, including funding information, see: <https://www.lgbtqihealtheducation.org/publication/lgbtqi-glossary-of-terms-for-health-care-teams/> which was initially published on February 3, 2020.

DAC's Curriculum Working Group will periodically update the below terms and definitions as the National Center and others update their understanding of acceptable terminology. You may also contact the Curriculum Working group of the Dean's Advisory Council for LGBTQI+ Affairs at Yale at LGBTQIaffairs@yale.edu for any suggested updates or changes.

DAC and the Working Group encourage educators at Yale to review the Glossary well and adapt terminology as appropriate for your own teaching. An accompaniment to the Glossary is the *LGBTQIA+ Terminology: A Very Brief Summary* compiled by the Working Group as a "quick start"

guide to teaching LGBTQIA+ content. We encourage you to use these two documents in tandem.

Agender (adjective) – Describes a person who identifies as having no [gender](#), or who does not experience gender as a primary identity component.

Ally (noun) – A person who actively supports the rights of a marginalized community even though that person is not a member of that community; for example, a [heterosexual](#) person who campaigns for the rights of [gay](#) people.

Aromantic (adjective) – Describes a person who experiences little or no romantic attraction to others, and/or lacks interest in forming romantic relationships. Aromantic people may still have intimate and/or sexual relationships.

Asexual (adjective) – Describes a person who experiences little or no sexual attraction to others. Asexual people may still engage in sexual activity.

Assigned female at birth/Assigned male at birth (noun) – Refers to the sex that is assigned to an infant, most often based on the infant's anatomical and other biological characteristics. Commonly abbreviated as AFAB (assigned female at birth) or AMAB (assigned male at birth).

Bigender (adjective) – Describes a person whose gender identity combines two genders.

Binding (verb) – The process of tightly wrapping one's chest in order to minimize the appearance of having breasts. This is achieved through use of constrictive materials such as cloth strips, bandages, or specially designed undergarments, called binders.

Biphobia (noun) – Discrimination towards, fear, marginalization, and hatred of [bisexual](#) people, or those who are perceived as bisexual. Individuals, communities, policies, and institutions can be biphobic. Often people use [homophobia](#) as an umbrella term, but biphobia can also be distinct from homophobia.

Bisexual (adjective) – A [sexual orientation](#) that describes a person who is emotionally and physically attracted to women/females and men/males. Some people define bisexuality as attraction to all genders. See [pansexual](#).

Bottom (noun) – A slang term for genitals and buttocks. Also used to refer to the receptive partner in anal sex in [gay](#) relationships or to the more passive partner during sexual intercourse in general.

Bottom surgery (noun) – Slang term for [gender-affirming genital surgery](#).

Cisgender (adjective) – A person whose gender identity is consistent in a traditional sense with their sex assigned at birth; for example, a person assigned female sex at birth whose gender identity is woman/female. The term *cisgender* comes from the Latin prefix *cis*, meaning “on the same side of.”

Coming out (verb) – The process of identifying and accepting one’s own [sexual orientation](#) or [gender identity](#) (coming out to oneself), and the process of sharing one’s sexual orientation or gender identity with others (coming out to friends, family, etc.).

Gender-affirming hormone therapy (noun) – Feminizing and masculinizing hormone treatment to align secondary sex characteristics with [gender identity](#).

Differences of Sex Development (DSD) (noun) – See [intersex](#).

Drag (noun) – The theatrical performance of a [gender](#) or multiple genders that are not your own. Performers are called Drag Kings and Drag Queens. Most drag performers are [cisgender](#). The terms Drag King and Drag Queen can also be used as an insult.

Gay (adjective) – A [sexual orientation](#) describing people who are primarily emotionally and physically attracted to people of the same [sex](#) and/or [gender](#) as themselves. Commonly used to describe men who are primarily attracted to men, but can also describe women attracted to women.

Gender (noun) – The characteristics and roles of women and men according to social norms. While [sex](#) is described as female, male, and intersex, gender can be described as feminine, masculine, androgynous, and much more.

Gender affirmation (noun) – The process of making social, legal, and/or medical changes to recognize, accept, and express one’s [gender identity](#). Social changes can include changing one’s [pronouns](#), name, clothing, and hairstyle. Legal changes can include changing one’s name, sex designation, and gender markers on legal documents. Medical changes can include receiving [gender-affirming hormones](#) and/or [surgeries](#). Although this process is sometimes referred to as *transition*, the term *gender affirmation* is recommended.

Gender-affirming hormone therapy (GAHT)/hormone replacement therapy (HRP) (noun) –

Hormone treatment used to reduce characteristics of one's [sex assigned at birth](#) and highlight characteristics aligned with that person's [gender identity](#). GAHT/HRP can be administered alone or in combination with gender-affirming surgeries listed below. Types of GAHT/HRP include:

Feminizing hormone therapy: medication to block testosterone production, estrogen to decrease testosterone production and increase secondary sex characteristics associated with being female.

Masculinizing hormone therapy: testosterone to suppress menstrual cycles and decrease production of estrogen.

Gender-affirming surgery (GAS) (noun) – Surgeries to modify a person's body to be more aligned with that person's [gender identity](#). Types of GAS include [chest](#) and [genital](#) surgeries, facial feminization, body sculpting, and hair removal.

Gender-affirming chest surgery (noun) – Surgeries to remove and/or construct a person's chest to be more aligned with that person's [gender identity](#). Also referred to as *top surgery*. Types of chest surgeries include:

Feminizing breast surgery: breast augmentation, chest construction, or breast mammoplasty

Masculinizing chest surgery: mastectomy (removal of breast tissue) and chest contouring

Gender-affirming genital surgeries (noun) – Surgeries that help align a person's genitals and/or internal reproductive organs with that person's [gender identity](#), including:

Clitoroplasty (creation of a clitoris)

Hysterectomy (removal of the uterus; may also include removal of the cervix, ovaries, and fallopian tubes)

Labiaplasty (creation of inner and outer labia)

Metoidioplasty (creation of a masculine phallus using testosterone-enlarged clitoral tissue)

Oophorectomy (removal of ovaries)

Orchiectomy (removal of testicles)

Penectomy (removal of the penis)

Phalloplasty (creation of a masculine phallus)

Scrotoplasty (creation of a scrotum and often paired with testicular implants)

Urethral lengthening (to allow voiding while standing)

Vaginectomy (removal of the vagina)

Vaginoplasty (creation of a neo-vagina)

Vulvoplasty (creation of a vulva)

Gender binary structure (noun) – The idea that there are only two [genders](#) (girl/woman and boy/man), and that a person must strictly fit into one category or the other.

Gender-diverse (adjective) – Describes the community of people who fall outside of the [gender binary structure](#) (e.g., [non-binary](#), [genderqueer](#), [gender fluid](#) people).

Gender dysphoria (noun) – Distress experienced by some people whose [gender identity](#) does not correspond with their [sex assigned at birth](#). The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) includes gender dysphoria as a diagnosis for people whose distress is clinically significant and impairs social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning. The degree and severity of gender dysphoria is highly variable among [transgender](#) and [gender-diverse](#) people.

Gender euphoria (noun) – A psychological condition which consists of comfort or even joy when thinking about one's true [gender identity](#), often accompanied by a strong desire to change one's [sex assigned at birth](#) to better match their identity or to be called the correct gendered language. Euphoria can be focused upon bodily attributes or treatment from others. It is possible for nonbinary people to feel gender euphoria too, for much the same reasons as binary transgender people. More specifically, **Top Euphoria** is a term most often used to describe someone's comfort or even joy when thinking about their preferred configuration, such as [transmasculine](#) people feeling top euphoria thinking about lack of breasts and masculine shoulders and arms, or [transfeminine](#) feeling top euphoria thinking about the presence of breasts on more feminine build. **Bottom Euphoria** is a term often used to describe one's comfort or even joy when thinking about their genitalia matching their gender identity. (Definition courtesy of Gender Wiki at: <https://gender.wikia.org/wiki/>).

Gender expression (noun) – The way a person communicates their [gender](#) to the world through mannerisms, clothing, speech, behavior, etc. Gender expression varies depending on culture, context, and historical period.

Gender fluid (adjective) – Describes a person whose [gender identity](#) is not fixed. A person who is gender fluid may always feel like a mix of more than one [gender](#), but may feel more aligned with a

certain gender some of the time, another gender at other times, both genders sometimes, and sometimes no gender at all.

Gender identity (noun) – A person’s inner sense of being a girl/woman/female, boy/man/male, something else, or having no [gender](#).

Gender role (noun) – A set of societal norms dictating what types of behaviors are considered acceptable, appropriate, or desirable for a person based on their actual or perceived [gender](#). These roles change with time, culture, context, and interpersonal relationships.

Genderqueer or gender queer (adjective) – An umbrella term that describes a person whose [gender identity](#) falls outside the traditional [gender binary](#) of male and female. Some people use the term *gender expansive*.

Heteronormativity (noun) – The assumption that everyone is [heterosexual](#), or that only heterosexuality is “normal.” Also refers to societal pressure for everyone to look and act in a stereotypically heterosexual way. Heteronormativity can manifest as heterosexism, the biased belief that heterosexuality is superior to all other sexualities.

Heterosexual (adjective) – A [sexual orientation](#) that describes women who are primarily emotionally and physically attracted to men, and men who are primarily emotionally and physically attracted to women. Also referred to as [straight](#).

Homophobia (noun) – Discrimination towards, and fear, marginalization, and hatred of [lesbian](#) and [gay](#) people, or those who are perceived as lesbian or gay. Individuals, communities, policies, and institutions can be homophobic.

Intersectionality (noun) – The idea that comprehensive identities are influenced and shaped by the interconnection of race, class, ethnicity, sexuality/[sexual orientation](#), [gender/gender identity](#), physical disability, national origin, religion, age, and other social or physical attributes.

Intersex (adjective) – Can be used both in a medical sense and as an identity term. From a medical perspective, it describes a group of congenital conditions in which the reproductive organs, genitals, and/or other sexual anatomy do not develop according to traditional expectations for females or males. The medical community sometimes uses the term *differences of sex development (DSD)* to describe intersex conditions; however, the term *intersex* is recommended by several

intersex community members and groups. Intersex can also be used as an identity term for someone with one of these conditions.

Lesbian (adjective, noun) – A [sexual orientation](#) that describes a woman who is primarily emotionally and physically attracted to other women.

LGBTQIA+ The term stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual and more (+) and is often used to describe the whole LGBTQIA+ community. This acronym exists in several versions (LGBT, LGBTQ, LGBTQ+, LGBTQI+), with more letters and the plus at the end being more inclusive.

Men who have sex with men/women who have sex with women (MSM/WSW) (noun) – Categories used in public health research and programs to describe people who engage in same-sex sexual behavior, regardless of how they identify their [sexual orientation](#). People rarely use the terms *MSM* or *WSW* to describe themselves.

Minority stress (noun) – Chronic stress faced by members of stigmatized minority groups, such as sexual and gender minority people. Minority stress is caused by external, objective events and conditions, expectations of such events, the

internalization of societal attitudes, and/or concealment of one's [sexual orientation](#) or [gender identity](#). Minority stress is compounded when a person holds multiple marginalized identities.

Misgender (verb) – To refer to a person by a [pronoun](#) or other gendered term (*e.g., Ms./Mr.*) that incorrectly indicates that person's [gender identity](#).

Chosen Name/Name Used (noun) – The name a person goes by and wants others to use in personal communication, even if it is different from the name on that person's insurance or identification documents (*e.g., birth certificate, driver's license, and passport*). *Chosen name* is recommended over *preferred name*. The terms *Chosen name* or *Name used* can be put on patient health care forms alongside *Name on your insurance (if different)* and *Name on your legal identification documents (if different)*. In conversation with patients, health care staff can ask, "What name do you want us to use when speaking with you?", or "What is your chosen name?"

Outing (verb) – Involuntary or unwanted disclosure of another person's [sexual orientation](#) or [gender identity](#).

Non-binary (adjective) – Describes a person whose [gender identity](#) falls outside of the traditional [gender binary structure](#) of girl/woman and boy/man. Sometimes abbreviated as *NB* or *enby*. The terms non-binary and [genderqueer](#) are often, but not always, used interchangeably. If you are uncertain, use the term the person chose for themselves.

Open relationship (noun) – Describes a relationship between two partners who consensually agree to non-monogamy (i.e., intimacy outside the primary partnership).

Pangender (adjective) – Describes a person whose [gender identity](#) is comprised of many [genders](#) or falls outside the traditional cultural parameters that define gender.

Pansexual (adjective) – A [sexual orientation](#) that describes a person who is emotionally and physically attracted to people of all [gender identities](#), or whose attractions are not related to other people's [gender](#).

Polyamorous (noun) – A sexual and/or romantic relationship comprising three or more people. Polyamorous can also describe a person in a polyamorous relationship. Sometimes abbreviated as *poly*.

Pronouns (noun) – Pronouns are the words people should use when they are referring to you, but not using your name. Examples of pronouns are she/her/hers, he/him/his, and they/them/theirs. The appropriate phrasing is “What are your pronouns?” when seeking this information.

QPOC (noun) – An acronym that stands for *queer person of color* or *queer people of color*.

Queer (adjective) – An umbrella term describing people who think of their [sexual orientation](#) or [gender identity](#) as outside of societal norms. Some people view the term *queer* as more fluid and inclusive than traditional categories for sexual orientation and gender identity. Although queer was historically used as a slur, it has been reclaimed by many as a term of empowerment. Nonetheless, some still find the term offensive.

Questioning (adjective) – Describes a person who is unsure about, or is exploring their [sexual orientation](#) and/or [gender identity](#).

Same gender loving (SGL) (adjective) – An alternative to the terms [gay](#) and [lesbian](#). SGL is more commonly used by African-American/Black communities.

Same-sex attraction/attracted (SSA) (noun/adjective) – Describes the experience of a person who is emotionally and/or physically attracted to people of the same [sex](#) or [gender](#), but does not necessarily engage in same-sex sexual behavior. Used most commonly by people who live in religious communities that are not accepting of LGBTQIA+ identities. People who use SSA as an identity term may not feel comfortable with the terms [gay](#), [lesbian](#), [queer](#), or [bisexual](#).

Sex (noun) – See [sex assigned at birth](#).

Sex assigned at birth (noun) – The sex (male or female) assigned to an infant, most often based on the infant's anatomical and other biological characteristics.

Sometimes referred to as birth sex, natal sex, biological sex, or sex; however, sex assigned at birth is the recommended term.

Sexual orientation (noun) – How a person characterizes their emotional and sexual attraction to others.

Social stigma (noun) – Negative stereotypes and lower social status of a person or group based on perceived characteristics that separate that person or group from other members of a society.

Straight (noun) – See [heterosexual](#).

Structural stigma (noun) – Societal conditions, policies, and institutional practices that restrict the opportunities, resources, and well-being of certain groups of people.

Top (noun) – A slang term for the chest. Also refers to the insertive partner in a sex or more generally to the more dominant partner during sexual intercourse.

Top surgery (noun) – Slang term for [gender-affirming chest surgery](#).

Transgender (adjective) – Describes a person whose [gender identity](#) and [sex assigned at birth](#) do not correspond based on traditional expectations; for example, a person assigned female sex at birth who identifies as a man; or a person assigned male sex at birth who identifies as a woman. Transgender can also include people with gender identities outside the girl/woman and boy/man [gender binary structure](#); for example, people who are [gender fluid](#) or [non-binary](#). Sometimes abbreviated as *trans*.

Trans man/transgender man (noun) – A transgender person whose [gender identity](#) is boy/man/male may use these terms to describe themselves. Some will use the term *man*.

Trans woman/transgender woman (noun) – A transgender person whose [gender identity](#) is girl/woman/female may use these terms to describe themselves. Some will use the term *woman*.

Trans feminine (adjective) – Describes a person who was assigned male sex at birth and identifies with femininity to a greater extent than with masculinity.

Trans masculine (adjective) – Describes a person who was assigned female sex at birth and identifies with masculinity to a greater extent than with femininity.

Transphobia (noun) – Discrimination towards, fear, marginalization, and hatred of [transgender](#) people or those perceived as transgender. Individuals, communities, policies, and institutions can be transphobic.

Transsexual (adjective) – A term used sometimes in the medical literature or by some [transgender](#) people to describe people who have gone through the process of medical gender affirmation treatments (i.e., [gender-affirming hormones](#) and [surgeries](#)).

Trauma-informed care (noun) – An organizational structure and treatment framework that centers on understanding, recognizing, and responding to the effects of all types of trauma.

Tucking (noun) – The process of hiding one's penis and testes with tape, tightshorts, or specially designed undergarments.

Two-Spirit (adjective) – Describes a person who embodies both a masculine and a feminine spirit. This is a culture-specific term used among some Native American, American Indian, and First Nations people.

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Outdated and Insensitive Terms to Replace

Many people consider the following terms outdated and insensitive. We recommend replacing these words with the suggested terms provided.

Outdated term	Recommended term
Berdache	Two-Spirit
Biological female/male	Assigned female at birth/Assigned male at birth
Cross-sex hormone therapy; hormone replacement therapy	Gender-affirming hormone therapy
Disorders/differences of sex development	Intersex
Female-to-male (FTM) and Male-to-female (MTF)	Trans man/transgender man and term man. Trans woman/transgender woman
Gender nonconforming	Non-binary
Hermaphrodite/Ambiguous genitalia	Intersex
Homosexual	Gay or Lesbian
Legal name	Administrative name or Name on legal documents
Preferred name	Chosen Name/Name Used
Preferred pronouns	Pronouns
Sex change/Sex reassignment surgery/Gender reconstruction surgery	Gender-affirming hormone therapy (GAHT)/hormone replacement therapy (HRP) (noun) – Hormone treatment used to reduce characteristics of one's sex assigned at birth and highlight characteristics aligned with that person's gender identity. GAHT/HRP can be administered alone or in combination with gender-affirming surgeries listed below. Types of GAHT/HRP include: Feminizing hormone therapy: medication to block testosterone production, estrogen

	<p>to decrease testosterone production and increase secondary sex characteristics associated with being female.</p> <p>Masculinizing hormone therapy: testosterone to suppress menstrual cycles and decrease production of estrogen.</p> <p>Gender-affirming surgery (GAS)</p>
Sexual preference/lifestyle	Sexual orientation
Transgendered	Transgender
<p>Additionally, <u>Queer</u> is largely thought of as positive within the LGBTI community as a term that has been reclaimed by people in this community. However, it may be offensive to some and problematic if used by people who are not LGBTQI themselves. Consider using LGBTQIA+ in the classroom instead.</p>	

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